



STRESS-FREE HOLIDAYS



While the holiday season can be a time of joy and cheer, unfortunately stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, money demands, and family togetherness, can often result in holiday stress and depression. The following will help you understand how you can help reduce your risk of holiday stress.

- ❄ **Relationships:** Relationship tension among family, friends, and intimate partners, can become worse during the holidays. And if you're facing the holidays without a loved one, you may find yourself lonely or sad. *Family relationships:* Especially if you are together for several days, conflicts among family members are bound to arise with so many needs and interests to accommodate. *Intimate partners:* Whether you are dating or recently married or living together, tension often arises when deciding when both want to follow their own traditions, but yet want to be together.
- ❄ **Finances:** Like your relationships, finances can also cause stress at any time of the year. But overspending during the holidays on gifts, travel, food and entertainment can increase stress if you spend beyond your means.
- ❄ **Physical demands:** Activities such as shopping, attending social gatherings, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization, and preparing holiday meals can wear you down. Feeling tired can also increase your stress, creating a vicious cycle. Then in addition to stress, add lack of exercise, and overindulgence in food and drink can result in holiday illness. Getting plenty of exercise and sleep are good ways to help manage stress and fatigue.

Preventing Holiday Stress & Depression

- ❄ Have less expectation-don't compete with past holidays or try to make this "the best ever". Set realistic goals, pace yourself, and organize time. Write a list of the most important activities and things to do. Do not plan too much. Be realistic about what you can do. Don't spend too much time preparing for one day (Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.).
- ❄ Remember the holiday season does not automatically feelings of sadness or loneliness go away-there is room for this feeling to be present, even if the person chooses not to express them.
- ❄ Let go of the past! Don't be disappointed if your holidays are not like they used to be. Life brings changes. Each holiday season is different and can be enjoyed in its' own way. You set yourself up for sadness if everything has to be just like the "good old days". Look toward the future.
- ❄ Do something for someone else. It is an old remedy, but it can help. Try volunteering some time to help others.
- ❄ Enjoy holiday activities that are free-drive and look at Christmas decorations-go window shopping.
- ❄ Do not drink too much. Alcohol is a depressant, so excessive drinking will make you feel more depressed.
- ❄ Don't be afraid to try something new. Celebrate the holidays in a way you have not done before.
- ❄ Spend time with "supportive" people who care about you. Even those who care about you might not always be supportive. Make new friends if you are alone during special times. Contact someone you have lost touch with.
- ❄ Find time for yourself! Don't spend all your time providing activities for your family and friends.

If you in crisis of depression, please call the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health 24-hour hotline at 1-800-854-7771

Some material obtained from the national Mental Health Association

DeCarli, J (2009)